

ACTIVITY: BUILDING RESPECT FOR THE PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

Overview

History provides a wealth of knowledge and facts about the events, conditions, and people of the past. By studying history, people can learn from the past to gain perspective and insights for living in the present and the future. Applying the lessons learned can lead to a new sense of purpose and responsibility. Through the study of the history of national parks, students can understand and respect the National Park Service's stewardship mission and learn to be responsible citizens who care for the parks and the environment.

Objectives

Students will be able to

1. conduct research to gain knowledge and understanding of historical events;
2. create a timeline of events that reflects the history, development, impact, and significance of a national park;
3. discuss and debate an issue taking into consideration various opinions, perspectives, and feelings;
4. explain the responsibilities and stewardship goals of the National Park Service;
5. understand and explain the value of the national parks for our country.

Background

As of August 2003, the National Park System of the United States consisted of 388 areas covering more than 84 million acres. A person could visit a national park area each day for a year and not visit them all! National park areas, which include national parks, monuments, memorials, preserves, seashores, historic sites, and battlefields have such national significance that special recognition and protection is justified. Each park area has a special characteristic such as a natural resource, historical significance, or societal value for which it was designated.

The first national park worldwide was established by the U.S. Congress in 1872. The Yellowstone National Park Act of 1872 set aside more than one million acres of public domain lands from settlement, occupancy, or sale to be



HISTORY AND SOCIAL SCIENCE: Virginia Studies, Civics, and Economics

CHARACTER: Respect, Responsibility, Citizenship

GRADE LEVEL
4th and 5th Grades, adaptable for other grade levels

VIRGINIA STANDARDS OF LEARNING
Science: 5.7
History and Social Science: CE.4, VS.1, VS.9
English: 4.1, 4.7, 4.8, 4.9, 5.1, 5.3, 5.6, 5.7, 5.8

LENGTH/DURATION
6-8 weeks

MATERIALS
2 well-worn hardcover books, resource materials including books, articles, and Internet sources, stamps, envelopes, poster board, paper, pencils, coloring materials

VOCABULARY
national park, monetary value, protection, preservation, natural resources, impact, significance, debate, perspective, commitment, value, environment, ethics, responsibility, citizenship, stewardship

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“dedicated and set apart as a public park or pleasuring-ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people.”

Yellowstone National Park was placed under the exclusive control of the Secretary of the Interior, who was to “provide for the preservation, from injury or spoliation, of all timber, mineral deposits, natural curiosities, or wonders within said park, and their retention in their natural condition.” The Secretary of the Interior utilized the Department of the Army to oversee the lands. This set the precedent for other natural reserves under federal jurisdiction and began a worldwide national park movement. Currently, more than 100 nations contain more than 1,200 national parks or equivalent preserves.

With the **Organic Act of 1916**, signed by President Woodrow Wilson, Congress created a new agency called the National Park Service. Placed in the Department of the Interior, the National Park Service became responsible for protecting the national parks and monuments “currently managed by the Department of the Interior and those yet to be established.” The “Organic Act” states that

the Service...shall promote and regulate the use of the Federal areas known as national parks, monuments, and reservations...by such means and measures...to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.

National parks hold a special place in the hearts of all Americans, to whom the parks

belong. Each park tells a story and represents a special characteristic important to our country through its history, location, or amazing natural features. These stories are just waiting to be discovered and valued by students who will realize that national parks are part of their history, their future, their pleasure, and their responsibility. As responsible citizens, students can ensure that these national treasures will be here for generations to come!

For more information on the history of the

National Park Service, visit the following website:

http://www.cr.nps.gov/history_nps.htm



Yellowstone National Park

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LESSON

Motivational Activity

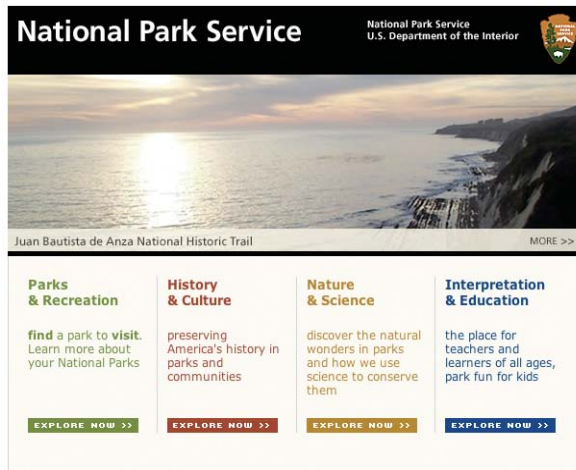
Show students an old, loved, well-worn, hardcover book. Ask students the following question: “If you had to place a monetary value on this book, what would it be and why?” Ask, “Does the idea that this book has endured many years of use and has been part of so many fond memories make it more valuable? What if it is out of print and can’t be replaced? Would that make it worth more? Why?” Develop the concept that history can influence respect and value.

Activities

1. Create a fictitious history for another well-worn book and share it with the students. For example: “I borrowed this book from a Civil War museum. It belonged to Abraham Lincoln and was given to his son, Tad. Inscribed inside is a short note to his son written by Mr. Lincoln. The note tells his son that he read the book by firelight in a small cabin in Kentucky.” Ask the question: “If you had to place a monetary value on this book, what would it be and why?” Would it be more valuable than the first book? Do the students think the book should be kept in a museum for preservation? Encourage them to relate the value of this book to personal and family heirlooms that are respected, cherished, and treasured.
2. Introduce students to the National Park Service as the primary protector of our national treasures, the National Park System. Discuss the goals of the Park Service to provide recreational and educa-

tional opportunities for citizens and to preserve and protect the parks for future generations. Outline the Congressional acts leading to formation and development of national parks.

Individually or in pairs, have the students choose a national park in the United States to research. They can begin by visiting the National Park Service’s website at www.nps.gov. Each park in



the Service has a web page with an “In Depth” button for expanded information. After selecting a park, have the students locate and mark the park on a U.S. map. Have them conduct research on the website or in the library. Have the students draft letters to the parks to request information packets and park brochures. Allow at least 1 month for the students to receive the information.

Have students prepare a presentation on their selected parks. This might be in the form of a collage, poster, diorama, or report. The presentation should include why the park was created (the unique or

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special characteristics for which the park was established); the sacrifices, consequences, and impacts, both positive and negative, that resulted from creating the park; how the park preserves, protects, and provides enjoyment; and the responsible behavior citizens must demonstrate in order to protect and preserve the park for now and for future generations.

3. After the presentations, ask for student opinions: “What difference do the national parks make in our lives, in the future of our nation, and in plans and feelings about recreation and travel? How is protection and preservation important to the future? What might happen if these natural and historical resources were not protected?” Introduce the term *stewardship* and ask how individuals can demonstrate responsibility and good citizenship to insure the continuation of the national park stewardship goals. Have the students write in a journal or portfolio about

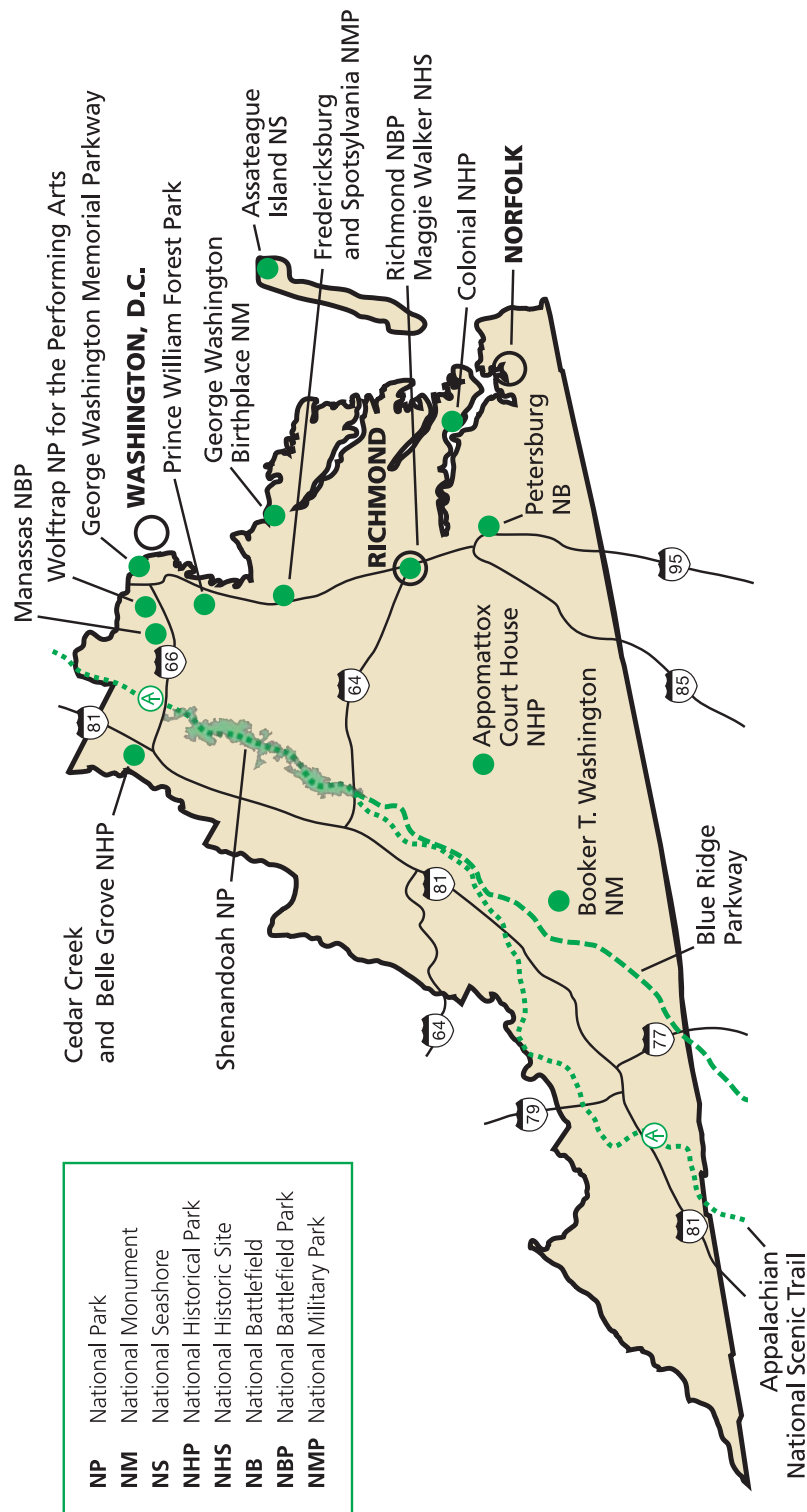
their ideas, feelings, and aspirations regarding the parks and stewardship.

4. As a class, identify the national park sites in Virginia and locate each on a state map. Determine the national park site nearest to your school. Have the students research and discover the park’s purpose and significance, any problems related to its formation, and the park’s status and importance to the community today. Create a class timeline of the park’s history, including events leading to the park’s designation and development. Take a field trip to experience the national park site firsthand. Take a walk on a park trail, go on a ranger program, or stop at a visitor center to view exhibits and films. Share the students’ work and discoveries with other classes, the school, parents, or the community.

Page 29 is an example and format for a study of Shenandoah National Park.



National Park Areas in Virginia



SHENANDOAH NATIONAL PARK

Divide the history of the park into enough time periods for every 2-4 students in the class. Post the time periods on the board. Shenandoah National Park's history is on the park's web page at www.nps.gov/shen/3b.htm



The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) built much of Shenandoah National Park's infrastructure.

Examples of time periods:

- Geological formation of the mountains.
- Native American use and presence.
- Exploration by Governor Spotswood.
- Pioneer expansion and settlement.
- Pre-park economy and land use.
- Congressional authorization and land acquisition for the park.
- Establishment and development of the park (Civilian Conservation Corps, President Roosevelt's dedication of the park).
- Present conditions and status of Shenandoah National Park.
- Future projections for Shenandoah National Park.

Divide the class into teams and assign (or have the students select) time periods. Have the teams research the time period, take notes, and write a report following the writing process of write, revise, edit, and rewrite.

Have the teams use their reports to create posters that depict the history of the park during the chosen time period. Use the following criteria:

- Each poster must be a standard size determined by the teacher.
- Each poster must be oriented vertically.
- The time period, title, and time span in years must be clearly posted and centered at the top of the poster.
- Posters should have a colorful border.
- Pictures should be created with a 3-dimensional effect.

Have the students combine their completed posters to create a class timeline that represents the chronological history of the national park.

Class discussion and journal or portfolio writing topics:

- What have you learned that you didn't know about Shenandoah National Park?
- Have your research and knowledge of the history of the park increased your respect for the environment of Shenandoah National Park?
- How could we help others to gain this historical perspective and increased respect?
- How will you use this new understanding and appreciation to change your behavior and commitment to the preservation and protection of national parklands along with designated wilderness areas?

Take a field trip to experience Shenandoah National Park firsthand. Take a walk on a trail, go on an education program, and stop at a visitor center to view exhibits and films.



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5. Review the parts of a friendly letter and have students write letters to the ranger and/or the park that they visited. Have each writer explain one item that he/she learned or describe a favorite, meaningful experience. Each letter should express his/her appreciation for the national park and its resources. Each letter should also describe new resolutions and behaviors of responsibility, respect, and stewardship that the writer will follow as a result of his/her learning experiences and the park visit.

6. As a culminating activity, conduct a debate in which speakers present diverse facts and opinions on issues concerning the impact of national park areas. Select a park and critical issue to debate. Example issues:

- Reactions to the establishment of a park, including current and future impacts.
- Construction and development of land adjacent to a park.
- Effects of pollution on park resources.
- Illegal or inappropriate use of park resources.
- Effects of increased (or decreased) park visitation.

Divide the class into 4-5 different interest groups. Perspectives might include

- people who use and enjoy park resources such as visitors, campers, tourists, fishermen, tour companies, school classes, or senior citizens;
- people who were displaced or moved for the creation of the park (some happy and others not);
- homeowners or community representatives concerned about water, land, and

air use quality and availability;

- businesses such as factories, farms, or transportation industries impacted economically by environmental laws;
- local hunters;
- historical societies and civic organizations.

A group might even represent the viewpoint of the plants, animals, or historic resources protected by the park.

Write a brief description of the issue to debate and provide to all the groups. Allow time for the groups to develop presentations that explain the differing points of view. Have each group select a spokesperson to present the group's case. Encourage the students to consider the validity and value of different points of view. Parents or other classes might be asked to be the audience and discuss the debate results. As a conclusion, have students determine the park's value, future needs, and the ways the students can contribute to the park's present and future.



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7. Knowing the history and mission of an individual national park site can help students value and respect the school, their community, and the environment. Have students express, in a journal or a creative writing format, the personal values and ethics they have gained and the behavior changes that have resulted from this study. Allow time to share the writings with others, if desired. Discuss how they will become better, more respectful stewards and responsible citizens as a result. The students could also create a “contract” with themselves detailing a personal plan for stewardship activity. Suggest that each person keep the contract in a safe place and review it in 5 or 10 years to see what he/she has accomplished. *Option:* Collect the contracts and return them to the students at a later time.

Assessments

1. Each student should organize and display the information received from a national park and explain the park’s location, formation, development, and unique or special characteristics.
 2. Students should demonstrate, through a debate, timeline, and their individual writings, their understanding of the importance of a national park, the legislation that created it, the methods of protection and preservation employed for its resources, and the impact parks have on people.
 3. A personal connection and sense of responsibility should be expressed in a portfolio and/or journal writings, in observed behavior, and in each student’s ability to educate others using historical facts, information, and personal values.
1. Conduct “Loving It Too Much” national park activity from *Project Learning Tree*.
 2. Host a class national park celebration or “Park Day” and have students share their findings, reports, and posters with the school, parents, and the community.

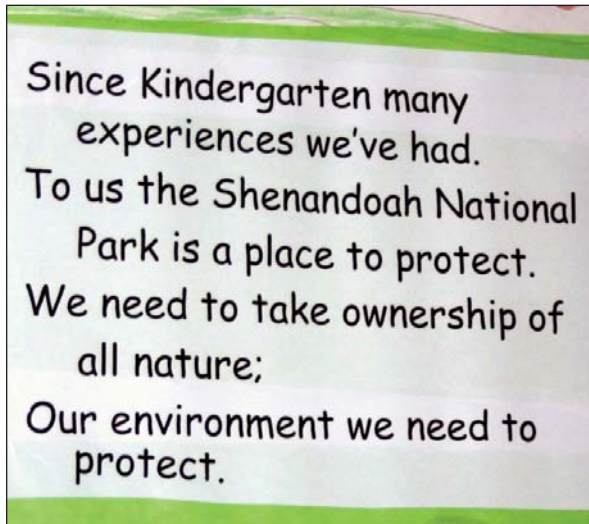
Going Further

1. Conduct “Loving It Too Much” national park activity from *Project Learning Tree*.
2. Host a class national park celebration or “Park Day” and have students share their findings, reports, and posters with the school, parents, and the community.



3. Create a progressive timeline of Virginia national park sites using adding machine tape or drawer lining paper. This may be displayed in the hall and might be accompanied by a display of significant parallel social, historical, and cultural events from Virginia or United States history.
4. Have students create brochures featuring information on a national park site in the U.S. Make copies to mail to local park rangers or to the site itself. Each brochure should highlight building respect for the environment of the national park through a knowledge of its past, present, and future.

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Related Subject Activities

- 1) Art - posters, displays, dioramas
- 2) Social Science - location of parks in the U.S., study of the history of an area and events leading up to present conditions
- 3) Speech – debating a controversial issue
- 4) English - research, letters, reports, poetry

Resources and References

The U.S. National Park Service website:

<http://www.nps.gov>

History of the NPS:

http://www.cr.nps.gov/history_nps.htm

Exploring the Real Thing: A Guide to Educational Programs at National Park Sites in Virginia. United States Dept. of the Interior. National Park Service, Northeast Region, 2001. <http://nps.gov/ert>

Project Learning Tree. Washington, D.C.: American Forest Foundation, 2003.
“Loving It Too Much.” 108-113.

Everhart, William C. *The National Park Service.* Praeger Publishers, Inc., 1972.

Sellars, Richard West. *Preserving Nature in the National Parks: A History.* Yale University Press, 1997.

National Geographic's Guide to the National Parks of the United States. The National Geographic Society, 1994.

The Story Behind the Scenery. (A series of books on national park areas.) KC Publications, Inc.

The National Parks: Index 2004-2006. Washington, D.C. United States Dept. of the Interior, National Park Service.

<http://bookstore.gpo.gov>

The National Parks: Shaping the System. Washington, D.C., United States Dept. of the Interior, National Park Service, 1991.

<http://bookstore.gpo.gov>

